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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 005972

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TAGS: PREL SU TU US

SUBJECT: ENCOURAGING TURKEY ON DARFUR

REF: ANKARA 1957

Classified By: Ambassador Ross Wilson. Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Ambassador followed up the President's lengthy exchange on Darfur with Turkish President Erdogan earlier this month in meetings October 13 and 16 with MFA U/S Tuygan and PM/FM foreign policy advisor Davutoglu, respectively. Ambassador reviewed the state of play with respect to rehating the AU peacekeeping force as a UN peacekeeping mission. He urged Turkey to use its influence publicly and privately, including in the OIC, to persuade Sudanese President al-Bashir to accept the UN force.

¶2. (C) PM Erdogan visited Khartoum in late March (ref) for an Arab League Summit and, while there, visited Darfur. Subsequently, Turkish Red Crescent has been operating a clinic in Darfur and the Turkish government has provided food aid. While obviously uninformed about Darfur, Tuygan and Davutoglu were open to the idea of doing more in support of U.S. and international efforts to deal with the crisis there. Davutoglu said that Turkish interest in part stems from the affinity for the Ottoman Empire which continued in Darfur for as long as a decade after its demise. Even today, according to Davutoglu, there are references to the Ottoman Caliphate during Friday prayers in Darfur. He indicated that perhaps Turkey could work to mobilize the Organization of the Islamic Conference on the issue.

¶3. (C) Both Davutoglu and Tuygan indicated that the GOT would like to do more on Darfur. They saw this is an issue where Turkey's government can increase cooperation with the United States. Such cooperation would reflect well on the bilateral Shared Vision and Structured Dialogue established by Secretary Rice and FM Gul in July. They suggested that consultations would be most productive after the personnel changes that will play out over the next two months, but clearly would welcome discussions on Darfur and Africa generally anytime.

¶4. (C) ACTION REQUEST: Erdogan obviously cares deeply about Darfur. Turkey's public and private efforts with al-Bashir could be helpful. We will continue to urge them to be active, but the Turks are not well informed. We would encourage senior AF bureau officials or others working on Darfur traveling in the region in coming weeks or months to consider a short stop in Ankara to consult with the GOT.

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<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

WILSON